

CALIFORNIA WILDLIFE HABITAT RELATIONSHIPS SYSTEM
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R003 Pond Slider *Trachemys scripta*
Family: Emydidae Order: Testudines Class: Reptilia

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

This introduced species is a common and popular pet that frequently is released into the wild. There are no known breeding populations in California; however, pond sliders have been observed at many locations in the state, usually in reservoirs, and some of these populations could be breeding. Individuals can be seen basking on logs or snags from early spring to late fall. This species is distributed widely throughout eastern North America, but the nearest natural populations to California are in eastern New Mexico, and Sonora and Baja California, Mexico. Pond sliders do not do well in California. Seldom are they seen in numbers, although they have been known in some lakes for 20 years.

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: This species eats aquatic insects, fish, amphibians, aquatic plants and carrion (Stebbins 1954, Ernst and Barbour 1972).

Cover: This species is highly aquatic, rarely venturing away from water. It seeks shelter in water, under banks, rocks, logs, or other wood (Stebbins 1954, Ernst and Barbour 1972).

Reproduction: In the eastern U.S., nests are laid in well-drained soil above the water line near a river, lake or other body of water. No nests have been reported in California.

Water: Requires a natural or artificial body of water. In California, it is encountered most frequently in artificial water impoundments, although it has been observed in the Sacramento River. Water is a physiological requirement.

Pattern: In California, this species seems largely restricted to artificial bodies of water.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Pond sliders become active (can be observed basking) from March until September in California. They bask in early morning, forage in the water in mid-morning, then bask intermittently through the afternoon.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: None.

Home Range: No data.

Territory: No data.

Reproduction: In the eastern U. S., this species copulates in early spring and lays eggs in early May to early June. Clutches average 15 eggs (range 5-22), but there is considerable

regional variation, and in some places multiple clutches are laid (Stebbins 1954, Ernst and Barbour 1972). No reproduction has been reported in California.

Niche: This turtle probably is preyed upon by most larger wild mammalian predators, cats, dogs, and humans.

REFERENCES

- Ernst, C. H., and R. W. Barbour. 1972. Turtles of the United States. Univ. Kentucky Press, Lexington. 347pp.
- Stebbins, R. C. 1954. Amphibians and reptiles of western North America. McGraw-Hill, New York. 536pp.